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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet contains the statement of the Coalition of the American Home Economics Association, American Vocational Association, and Home Economics Education Association regarding the scope and definition of vocational home economics education. It is intended to serve as a basis for professional action. Sections of this statement address the following topics: consumer and homemaking education; home economics occupations for paid employment; funding and structure for vocational home economics education; current needs; rationale for consumer and homemaking education; funding consumer and homemaking education; the delivery system; federal roles; preparation of teachers and leaders; competencies needed; and responsibility for professional development. (YLB)

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Coalition Statement

Vocational Home Economics Education

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COALITION OF AHEA, AVA, AND HEEA

In 1977, a Coalition was established by the governing bodies of the three professional organizations concerned with vocational home economics education: the American Home Economics Association (AHEA), the American Vocational Association (AVA), and the Home Economics Education Association (HEEA). Each association selects two representatives to serve on the Coalition. The general purpose is to increase communication and to project a unified thrust and focus on issues related to vocational home economics education.

Objectives

The objectives of the Coalition are to:

1. Maintain continuous dialogue among professional organizations concerned with vocational home economics education.
2. Identify existing and potential issues of importance to vocational home economics education.
3. Review positions on current issues relating to vocational home economics education and facilitate development of consensus among the organizations.
4. Develop statements regarding vocational home economics which will serve as a basis for professional action.
5. Communicate issues and positions concerning vocational home economics education to various target groups.

Operation

The guidelines for the operation of the Coalition are:

1. Coalition members have the responsibility to consult with the officers and staff of the organization they represent and to reflect the philosophy and purpose of that organization to the Coalition.
2. The governing board and staff of each professional organization is responsible for communicating and clarifying to each

new group of officers and relevant committees the position and purposes of the Coalition.

3. The Coalition is to serve as a clearinghouse for policy or position statements developed by any one of the organizations.

4. Consensus on a position reached by the Coalition will be communicated to the governing boards of the three organizations.

5. When consensus cannot be reached, each organization will have the latitude to explore its own alternative position(s) with policy makers, *designating such as its own point of view* and presenting both the rationale and the reasons for differences. Such alternative positions are to be shared with other professional organizations through the Coalition.

SCOPE AND DEFINITION OF VOCATIONAL HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION

Vocational home economics education prepares youth and adults for competence in the work of the home and family as well as for occupations based on home economics skills. The concept of work, whether in a family or job setting, is central to vocational education. For the purpose of this paper, *vocational homemaking education* has been used as a generic term for programs now designated in legislation as "consumer and homemaking." *Vocational home economics education* is used as a more general term to include both types of programs and to describe professional educators.

Consumer and Homemaking Education

Managing a home and family requires knowledge and skills that are interrelated and necessary for optimum quality of life for individuals and families. Values, management, and interpersonal relationships are major concepts that unify the content of the subject matter areas: child and family development, clothing and textiles, consumer education and resource management, food and nutrition, and housing. Essential skills in-

clude: (a) providing for personal and family development at the various stages of the life cycle and for establishing satisfying personal and family relationships, (b) caring for and nurturing children, (c) providing and caring for personal and family clothing, (d) managing financial and other resources, (e) providing nutritious foods for self and family members, and (f) selecting and maintaining housing and living environments for self and others. There are additional skills which some consider to be home economics content, but if such skills are not essential in the work of the home and family, they should not be included in vocational homemaking education.

Home Economics Occupations for Paid Employment

Home economics occupations for paid employment utilize knowledge and skills related to the subject matter areas of home economics. Similar concepts and applications are basic to consumer and homemaking education and to the home economics occupations classified as paid employment. For example, some of the same basic principles are taught in food and nutrition for the homemaker as for the food service worker; the same clothing principles can be used by the homemaker that are used in the apparel industry; the same principles of human development apply in child and elderly care services as in caring for one's own family. Differences lie in the setting, the instructional objectives, the level of competency, degree of responsibility required, and the scope of operation. The overlap of concepts and applications remains a strength and a link between both types of programs.

Funding and Structure for Vocational Home Economics Education

Recognition of the relationship of well-ordered, quality home and family life to productive, satisfying work life is implicit, if not explicit, in the history of vocational education legislation. From the earliest legislation to support vocational education to the present, the Congress of the United States has included funding for home economics education. The funding for consumer and home-

making education implies acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of the role of family life and the functions of households to the economic, social, and political well-being of our nation.

From the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 to the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990, the legislation has evolved from a focus upon developing a workforce to meet the needs of industrial and corporate society to emphasizing the human needs of persons, including the need for occupational competence. Recent legislation gives particular emphasis to the training needs of special populations, the importance of integrating academic and vocational instruction, and the promotion of economic development and productivity. Many factors during that 73-year period affected the legislative priorities: a major depression; wars; dramatic technological changes; changes both in numbers and age proportions of the population; increased standard of living and economic security; increased numbers of persons in school and increased level of education for the population as a whole; social and governmental action to assure full and equal rights of opportunity under the law to all persons regardless of age, sex, race, or religion; and a phenomenal increase in the proportion of women entering the work force. A pervasive trend throughout this period has been the government role as intervenor to enhance the human condition. Over 70 years of vocational education legislation reflect this trend.

Current Needs

The federal support for vocational home economics education is needed more than ever to meet the stated and implicit goals of government and education. Although the dollar amounts funded have increased, they have not kept pace with inflation, and funding never has reached authorization levels in spite of heightened sensitivity to serious problems related to family and household functions. Skills needed to balance demands of work and family are increasingly cognitive and complex and not likely to be learned in the contemporary home and family setting without some intervention. Economist Kenneth Boulding said that one of the greatest weaknesses in our social structure is the household decision maker's lack of skill. In

traditional homes, the skills were passed down from one generation to the next, but not so today. He recommended a high priority for household education.

In the federal government, there is much interest in funding to ameliorate acute family-related social problems; however, efforts tend to be fragmented and to overlook established programs and delivery systems such as the secondary and post-secondary schools. The established systems can address emerging problems effectively and at less cost in time and dollars than development of a new bureaucracy.

Home economics educators urge three governmental actions: (a) full funding to the extent authorized by law for consumer and homemaking education, (b) continuation of categorical funding or other legislative assurance of education for consumer and homemaking education, and (c) strengthening of the established delivery system.

Why Consumer and Homemaking Education?

The family, or household, is a major institution of society for socializing the young. In addition to its educative and protective function, the family system interacts with the other major institutions of society. If the family system does not function, then other systems such as formal education and the business society will break down. Problems such as malnutrition, child abuse, consumer fraud, teenage pregnancy, energy waste, and environmental pollution, which are among our nation's most intense social concerns, all bear on the family. The habits and values of persons related to these matters generally are acquired in the home and family context. But economic, technological, political, and social forces have resulted in changes that have increased the complexity of choice and the burden upon families to make informed choices. The family system must be supported in its role for sustaining our society.

To be fully human no one can be exempted from interdependence with other persons. Each person needs basic competencies in interpersonal skills and resource management related to home and family in order to live a satisfying life regardless of the living style chosen. With women working

outside the home, sharing of home tasks is an inevitable outcome. Both men and women have been conditioned culturally to perceive homemaking as women's work; however, the competencies and attitudes necessary for balancing work and family roles are learned and these can and should be learned by both men and women. The increasing complexity and changing character of family roles and tasks seem to require that organized opportunities for learning these skills be enhanced and expanded.

Funding Consumer and Homemaking Education

Primary funding for most school programs at the present time is the responsibility of the state and local governments. These funds are needed and should be used for the regular maintenance and expansion of programs. Recognizing the added cost of vocational education, states have provided supplementary funding for vocational programs including vocational home economics education.

In the past, federal funds have been used to equalize the opportunities for vocational education among the states. This should be a continued goal for federal funding; however, the most important reason for federal funding is that certain national goals can be achieved best if there is federal support. National goals such as educational equity and education for special populations because of various cultural or economic histories may not be accepted by certain states or communities. These states or communities need to be encouraged, and therefore, federal dollars are needed to stimulate state funding. National goals related to vocational home economics education programs include such social concerns as managing individual and family resources; making consumer choices; balancing work and family; improving responses to individual and family crises (including family violence and child abuse); strengthening parenting skills (especially among teenage parents); preventing teen pregnancy; assisting aged and handicapped individuals; assisting as-risk populations (including the homeless); improving individual, child, and family nutrition and wellness; conserving limited resources; understanding the impact of new technology on life and work; and applying consumer

and homemaking skills to jobs and careers.

Consumer and Homemaking Education which has been recognized by Congress as a special program for funding is a unique facet of vocational education. Current legislation defines vocational education as preparation for paid and unpaid employment. The predominant focus is to prepare persons to earn a living. Although the occupation of homemaking is generally accepted as being essential for maintaining the family as the basic unit of society, it is more difficult to quantify the economic work of this occupation than other occupations for which vocational training is provided. Some progress is being made in public recognition of the economic contribution of homemaking, but the educational and social contributions of the home still are not given the same value among many people as those activities which lead to a specific wage, salary, or profit. One way for the nation to affirm its belief that family functions and education for family life are worthy is to continue funding consumer and homemaking education and to add incentive monies for particularly critical areas of concern.

For federal funds to be used to achieve national goals, some program guidance must be developed at the national level. Such guidance should be flexible enough to allow for adaptation to specific state and local needs, but there must be some assurance that the monies indeed will be used to achieve national goals.

The Delivery System

All persons should have the opportunity to participate in educational programs which prepare them for balancing the demands of work and family. This proposition suggests that such education should be provided in a number of institutions, agencies, and organizations within our society. It should be kept in mind, however, that in order to provide a continuous and regular educational program, the well-established and tested delivery systems should be used. Vocational home economics education in the public schools, including postsecondary and adult programs, is one such well-established system. School systems are the institutions in our society which still reach most people and have a continuing organized system for deliv-

ery of an educational program. Public schools have provided, and can continue to provide, both specific courses and comprehensive programs for regularly enrolled students and informal education programs for youth and adults. The schools also sponsor the vocational student organization, Future Homemakers of America Incorporated. The organization has Future Homemaker of America and Home Economics Related Organizations chapters which have become valuable vehicles for helping prepare youth for their future. Its seems logical, therefore, to conclude that if a home economics education program is to reach all people it must be continued through the public school system.

Society generally has viewed homemaking as female's work and home economics as a field of study for females. Increasingly, male students are enrolling in homemaking courses and gaining the opportunities for preparation in parenting, consumer decision making, and nutrition. Vocational home economics education cannot reach all students when facilities or number of teachers are limited, the program is not truly a vocational program but includes specific skills of interest only to a part of the school population, or any group is discouraged from enrolling.

Federal Roles

Federal vocational education funding, beginning in 1917, has assisted in developing a federal-state-local district communication system which has given continuity and stability to vocational home economics education programs provided by schools. This structure has had some weaknesses and needs to be reviewed and updated constantly in order to assure that it is working effectively and efficiently. Discarding or dismantling the system, however, is not the way to improve it. This federal-state-local cooperative effort has enabled states to work together in research, needs assessment, and curriculum development; enabled teachers, teacher-educators, and supervisors to combine efforts for program development and improvement; and established a network of communication which is used by other educational agencies and organizations to communicate with home economists.

Preparation of Teachers and Leaders

To maintain strong programs in vocational home economics education, the teacher-educators who prepare the teachers, the local and state supervisors of vocational home economics programs, and the curriculum developers for these programs must have education and experience in home economics. The preparation of home economics educators is vital to vocational home economics education. Certain competencies, including those in general education, specialized education, and professional education, are essential for teachers and leaders in vocational home economics education. General education competencies are based upon the supporting disciplines of physical, biological, social, and behavioral sciences; the arts; and humanities. The specialization competencies are derived from all subject matter areas of home economics. The professional competencies encompass knowledge and skills of the teaching/learning process.

Those individuals preparing to teach vocational home economics education should have developed the ability to interrelate all subject matter areas of home economics. This ability is essential for those who teach vocational home economics education since effective programs must consider the complete realm of maintaining homes involving the interaction of consumer education, nutrition, food usage, clothing, care and guidance of children, management of household tasks and finances, housing, values, and interpersonal relations. Home economists who teach occupational home economics need specialized preparation and appropriate occupational experience.

Competencies Needed

Competencies in each subject matter area of home economics must be demonstrated by individuals preparing to teach vocational home economics education. Social, economic, and technological conditions in society which affect the family demand special emphases in certain aspects of subject matter. Needs and interests of special populations should be considered in determining the present and projected competencies needed by vocational home economics teachers.

Some basic professional competencies for vocational home economics teachers are similar to those for all teachers. These include fulfilling professional roles, establishing interpersonal relationships, planning and managing the total program, providing instruction, guiding students in personal and professional development, and using appropriate evaluative procedures.

Additional competencies for effective vocational home economics teachers include the ability to:

- assess the needs for the people to be served through working with advisory committees, conducting surveys, and making home and family contacts;
- comprehend the principles and philosophy of vocational education;
- relate legislative program purposes to specific needs of the community;
- integrate the subject matter areas of home economics as they relate to the balancing work and family;
- demonstrate essential skills required for balancing demands of work and family and/or for occupations related to home economics;
- direct out-of-class experiences for students that relate to appropriate aspects of the occupation; and
- integrate the activities of FHA/HERO with the total vocational home economics education program to achieve the overall objectives.

Responsibility for Professional Development

The United States Department of Education, state education agencies, colleges and universities, and professional organizations all have a role in the professional preparation and continuing development of home economics educators. The Education Program Specialist for Vocational Home Economics Education in the U.S. Department of Education can help provide leadership in professional development through national and regional meetings that focus upon trends and issues inherent to teacher education. The U.S. Depart-

ment of Education can also help provide consistency by establishing national goals for the programs. State education agencies have been given the responsibility for establishing and maintaining standards and certification for teachers. These agencies insure that certification for teachers of vocational home economics education programs respond to state needs and state and national legislative purposes. Leadership for inservice education of teachers also is assumed by the state education agency in cooperation with colleges and universities. Local and state supervisors of vocational home economics education programs also must have input into planning and assessing teacher education programs; therefore, it is imperative for these administrators to have an educational background and experience in home economics.

Four-year institutions of higher education should continue to provide preservice education for teachers of vocational home economics education programs. It is the responsibility of colleges and universities preparing these teachers to employ teacher educators who have a background of experience and training in home economics since this is the field of study which provides the expertise needed for vocational home economics education programs. Comprehensive education in each subject matter area should be provided in preservice education, and the concept of the interrelatedness of all home economics subject matter should be emphasized. While specialization is necessary for the teacher of home economics occupations, the curriculum of consumer and homemaking education teachers must remain comprehensive and interrelated. Professional organizations serve to keep members current in professional competencies. These organizations provide opportunities for members to assume leadership in the implementation of legislative purposes of vocational home economics education as well as the interpretation of the program to the public.

The Coalition has been charged with the responsibility of coordinating the efforts for vocational home economics education for the American Home Economics Association (AHEA), American Vocational Association (AVA), and Home Economics Education Association (HEEA). These organizations must be in accord with each other to project a united position to policy makers at local, state, and national levels. Such unity can have a far-reaching effect upon outstanding, innovative vocational home economics education programs throughout the nation.

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